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INFO RHMFISS/CDR USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL//SCJ2//
RULGPIA/USCOMSOLANT

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STATE FOR INR/R/MR, I/GWHA, WHA, WHA/PDA, WHA/BSC,
WHA/EPSC
CDR USSOCOM FOR J-2 IAD/LAMA

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST; ROME CONFERENCE; USJ ROLE IN LATIN AMERICA; NORTHERN KOREA; US-BRAZILIAN ENCOUNTER ON FARM SUBSIDIES; STATUS OF AMBASSADOR WAYNE'S NOMINATION AS US AMBASSADOR TO ARGENTINA; 07/27/06

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's international leading stories include the status of the war in the Middle East; the outcome of the Rome Conference; the US reconsidering its role in Latin America; the threat posed by North Korea; the upcoming encounter between US and Brazilian authorities on farm subsidies; and the status of former A/S Wayne's nomination as US Ambassador to Argentina.

2. OPINION PIECES AND KEY STORIES

- "A war with more doubts than certainties"

Marcelo Cantelmi, international editor of leading "Clarín" on special assignment in Jerusalem, writes (07/27) "Both from a political and a military viewpoint, the war that has just begun has accumulated a mountain of doubts. In just two weeks, the bombing that has turned Lebanon into pieces does not seem to have had a conclusive impact on Hezbollah, which continues punishing Northern Israel.

"Therefore, and even though Israel only targeted Hezbollah, only the ruins of Lebanon remain..."

"There is a big debate in Israel on whether the decision to attack and the invasion, which is now focused on South Lebanon, was right. PM Olmert decided to attack right after he knew that the guerrillas had trapped two soldiers on a bordering post.

"... The Haaretz newspaper made public former Defense Minister Moshe Arens' statement that the military campaign is mismanaged and that it will only strengthen guerrillas. He summarized 'This will be a disaster for Israel.'"

- "The Rome Conference did not come to terms on a cease fire"

Julio Algaaraz, Rome-based correspondent for leading "Clarín," writes (07/27) "As expected, the international conference on Lebanon, which gathered in Rome yesterday for more than three hours, was neither a success nor a failure. It only issued a seven-paragraph statement, but not the unattainable, magic formula of an immediate cease fire.

"The foreign ministers of the fifteen countries gathered under US and Italian sponsorship, approved asking for an 'urgent' truce, called for a conference to raise donations to help a destroyed Lebanon, open humanitarian channels and call for a meeting under the UN umbrella in order to create an international military force that will separate contenders on the border between Lebanon and Israel.

"An immediate ceasefire is today a utopia because Israeli troops and Hezbollah's Shiite guerrillas are fighting just a few kilometers away from the border, in Lebanon. Hezbollah, which is supported by Syria and Iran, will only accept an immediate ceasefire in exchange for prisoners. Israel, which is supported by the US, demands an immediate release of the two captured soldiers and Hezbollah's disarmament and withdrawal toward the North so that it cannot attack again."

- "The US discusses what its regional role will be in the aftermath of the Cordoba summit"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion's" Washington-based correspondent, Hugo Alconada Mon, writes (07/27) "The Mercosur summit, which was held in Cordoba last week, has opened a debate among the experts that are closely following Latin America's political evolution about who were the winners and losers..."

"Left-wingers used the Summit to object to US President George W. Bush. Right-wingers used it to criticize Presidents Nestor Kirchner, Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro. While the Republican administration remained silent, it took the summit to verify 'who is who' in the agitated South American politics."

"According to the former US Assistant Secretary for Latin America, Otto Reich, the most important thing was 'the absence of an outcome' of the meeting in a 'negative' framework for the (Argentine) Government."

"Reich told 'La Nacion' that 'the Argentine Government did not save face.' 'The negative impact is for Kirchner, who let Chavez and Castro turn a session that should have been a serious one into a personal show, to the extreme that international media did not even report the event.'"

"Reich's conclusions are quite different from those of the analysts from the Council of Hemispheric Affairs, a left-wing organization. They believe that the Summit will be remembered as 'the moment of truth for Bush's presidency' regarding Latin America, because it made sure that the region got 'emancipated' from Washington and that Mercosur is today 'a more mature alliance.'"

"Moises Naim, editor of prestigious magazine 'Foreign Policy,' also criticized (US President) Bush's foreign policy. But, most importantly, he believes that Bush should change his strategy toward Latin America."

"The White House and the US Department of State opted for tactical silence... A Republican administration source said that 'It was a political rather than economic summit, and some tensions were perceived inside the bloc.'"

- "Farm subsidies - the US and Brazil will hold a 'meeting of reflection'"

Business-financial "Ambito Financiero" reports (07/27) "Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim and USTR Susan Schwab will hold a 'meeting of reflection' on Saturday after the suspension of global trade negotiations."

"According to Roberto Carvalho de Azevedo, Brazilian Director of the Economic Department at the Foreign Relations Meeting, the meeting, which will be held in Rio de Janeiro, will not be a 'negotiation'. 'We will not be negotiating anything. This will be a meeting of reflection.'"

"... In some statements published by Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper, Amorim said the meeting with USTR Schwab has been 'an unequivocal demonstration of involvement, and the wish to further discussions' that are intended to reach an agreement at the WTO... I trust US President George W. Bush's wish and political interest in reaching an agreement.'"

- "More delays in appointing a new US Ambassador"

Ana Baron, Washington-based correspondent for leading "Clarín," comments (07/27) "With time ticking down, the US Department of State has made moves for the US Senate to approve Earl Anthony Wayne's nomination as the new US Ambassador to Argentina before its recess, but there has been no news until last night.

"A diplomat who knows Wayne well told 'Clarín' 'We think his nomination will be confirmed but we do not know whether they will have time before the recess.' According to the diplomat, US Department of State officials were negotiating with Senator for Nevada John Ensign to have him lift the obstacles he placed on Mr. Wayne's nomination. Time is running out because if he does not do it before Friday, Wayne's confirmation will be postponed until September, October or indefinitely.

"If Wayne's nomination is not approved before Friday, (US President) Bush could appoint him during the Congressional recess, just like he did in the case of Otto Reich...

"However, it seems unlikely that he'll do it with Wayne for a couple of reasons. The ones who objected to his nomination are not Democrats but senators who are representing the interests of the Cuban-American community, to which Bush partly owes his election success in a controversial triumph in Florida...

"Secondly, the legislation allowing this kind of appointment during Congressional recesses was established only in cases of vacancies at key posts like, for instance, the (US) Embassy in the former Soviet Union. As time went by, the White House has used this legislation to appoint candidates who were rejected by the US Congress, but these kinds of nominations are badly seen by public opinion.

"Everything indicates that if Wayne's nomination is not confirmed by the US Senate before the recess and it is indefinitely postponed, his number two, Mike Matera, will be in charge of the US Embassy in Buenos Aires for a long time after the departure of Lino Gutierrez."

13. EDITORIALS

- "North Korea vs. the world"

An editorial in daily-of-record "La Nación" reads (07/27) "North Korea's authoritarian regime, which is led by Kim Jong Il, is hard to define according to international criteria. It is an autocratic

and impenetrable government that agitates the ghost of 'dangerous foreign enemies' to maintain its people submerged in nationalism... In this way, the North Korean regime has managed to confront the rest of the world, and this situation does not seem to shock it.

"North Korea wants to 'handle its own destiny' without any contact whatsoever with the rest of the world...

"Today, North Korea is the most dangerous proliferator of WMD in the world... To this threat, North Korea has added that of missiles...

"It is not surprising that the UN Security Council has issued Resolution 1695, which condemns North Korea's missile tests...

"Meanwhile, North Korea has only taken 45 minutes to fully reject said resolution and maintain a firm and allegedly imperturbable attitude in defiance of the rest of the world."

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